ARMOR AT WAR SERIES

7056

PANZER VOR! 2

German Armor at War 1939-45

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A Pz.Kpfw.II (Ausf.A, B or C), along with other German AFVs (Pz.Kpfw.III or IV and mittlerer Schützenpanzerwagen Sd.Kfz.251s) engage enemy forces on the outskirts of a city on the Ostfront. The Pz.Kpfw.II is identified at this angle as one version of the A through C, by the type and position of the exhaust muffler on the rear plate. This Panzer also has the retro-fitted commander's cupola with vision blocks as indicated by the opened circular hatch lid.

A large group of German AFVs and tactical supply trucks occupy an open area for as far as the eye can see. The Panzer in the center of the photograph is a Pz.Kpfw.II Ausf. A, B or C, which appears to have the circular cupola fitted. Other Panzers in the photo include more Pz.Kpfw.IIs, a Pz.Kpfw.35(t) and Pz.Kpfw.IIIs or IVs.

A pair of Pz.Kpfw.II Ausf.Fs cross an engineer bridge over an ice-bound Russian river; note how the small "Übergangsschienen" ramps, usually carried by the mittlerer Pionierpanzerwagen Sd.Kfz.251/7, are used to bridge the dips between the larger sections. These two Panzers are identified as Ausf.Fs by the shape of the front superstructure plate which went straight across, unlike earlier models that had a two-section plate, which bent back towards the rear on the starboard side. The turret was fitted with the circular commander's cupola, the hull front was squared-off (as opposed to the Ausf.A through C, which had a circular bow plate covered with a flat spaced-armor nose), and the stowage of a spare road-wheel on the upper glacis was a standardized fitting. These Panzers carry Tac numbers, "956" in the case of the first one, as well as black/white Balkenkreuz national insignia. Note the pair of mittlerer Zugkraftwagen Sd.Kfz.7/1 mounting 2cm Flakvierling 38 on the ridge in the background; tactical prudence dictated covering vital points such as river crossings, with anti-aircraft assets.

This photo depicts SS Panzers in action in Kharkov, February-March, 1943. They belong to SS-Panzergrenadier Division "Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler" and include a Pz.Kpfw.II Ausf.F trailing behind two other Panzers, including a Pz.Kpfw.IV. That the Pz.Kpfw.II is an Ausf.F, can be determined from this angle by the configuration and location of the exhaust muffler. The Panzer has been camouflaged with whitewash over the Dunkelgrau RAL 7021 base coat, and is marked as belonging to the 5.Kompanie. It is the subject of a color plate in this book.

The infantry accompanying Panzer number 14 have now "gone to ground" for cover against enemy fire. Note how the troops furthest forward have utilized the smallest undulation of the ground for protection. Also note camera angle, a further indication that the exercise was staged for the PK photographer.

The operation complete, the infantry move to board the Panzers for a ride to the next destination. In this photo, Panzer number 21 shows how some of this unit's vehicles were marked. The un-official "Ghost Division" insignia in white is seen in two places on the rear, on the storage box and the superstructure rear plate. The official division insignia, a ring bisected with a vertical line is seen in yellow on the rear superstructure plate. The far Panzer has a Nazi flag draped across the turret roof as an aerial recognition device.

The Panzers begin to move forward as some smoke rises in the vicinity of the structures just ahead. The troops are apparently rather unconcerned, as their attitude would suggest. Although its Tac number is obscured by the troops, this is Panzer number 21 as can be seen by the lay-out of the stowage on the engine deck.

This Bulgarian Maybach T-IV G (Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.G) works its way through a crowd during a parade in Sofia on December 2, 1944. Note that there are Bosch head-lamps on both fenders and that the commander's cupola features the one-piece hatch lid. There is also a number 13 painted on the center of the superstructure front plate, which is fitted with welded "Zusatzpanzer" appliqué armor plate. The driver's K.F.F.2 periscopes have also been deleted, while the radio antenna is still in the position it would occupy on an early-production Ausf.G.

Another Bulgarian Maybach T-IV G (Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.G) also bears the number 13 on the front superstructure plate, indicating that it is probably not a Tac number, but a commemorative device. This Panzer has bolted-on "Zusatzpanzer" appliqué armor that matches the style seen in a previous photo (note the separate segment to the left of the MG34 ball mount), as well as a single, un-covered Bosch head-lamp. Other features of interest are the "Filzbalgfilter" (cylindrical air filters) back on the starboard fender, the "Fliegerbeschußgerät" (anti-aircraft mount for an MG34) and the small vane sight in front of the commander's cupola. This Panzer remains in the factory applied Dunkelgelb RAL 7028 base color

This rear view of a group of Bulgarian Maybach T-IV Gs (Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.G) show how the St. Andrew's Cross national insignia was positioned on the rear of the turret Schürzen, as well as on the forward side segments, while there is a partial view of the Panzer's registration number on the superstructure rear plate of the nearest vehicle, just below the seated man on the engine deck. This Panzer also has the drive sprockets associated with the Ausf.H, as well as the "Filzbalgfilter" (cylindrical air filters) on the starboard fender. Finally note the tow coupling on the center of the bottom edge of the hull rear plate.

This Pz.Kpfw.IV, a late Ausf.G or early Ausf.H, has the features of both models of this work-horse Panzer. It has the final drive and drive sprockets of the Ausf.H, but the bolted-on "Zusatzpanzer" armor plates on the bow and superstructure front, associated with the Ausf.G. It also features a view-port flap for the radio operator as well as the "Filzbelgfilter" (cylindrical air filters) on the starboard fender. Note the uncovered Bosch head-lamp on the port fender, as well as the configuration of the turret front plate; it has only one view-port flap.

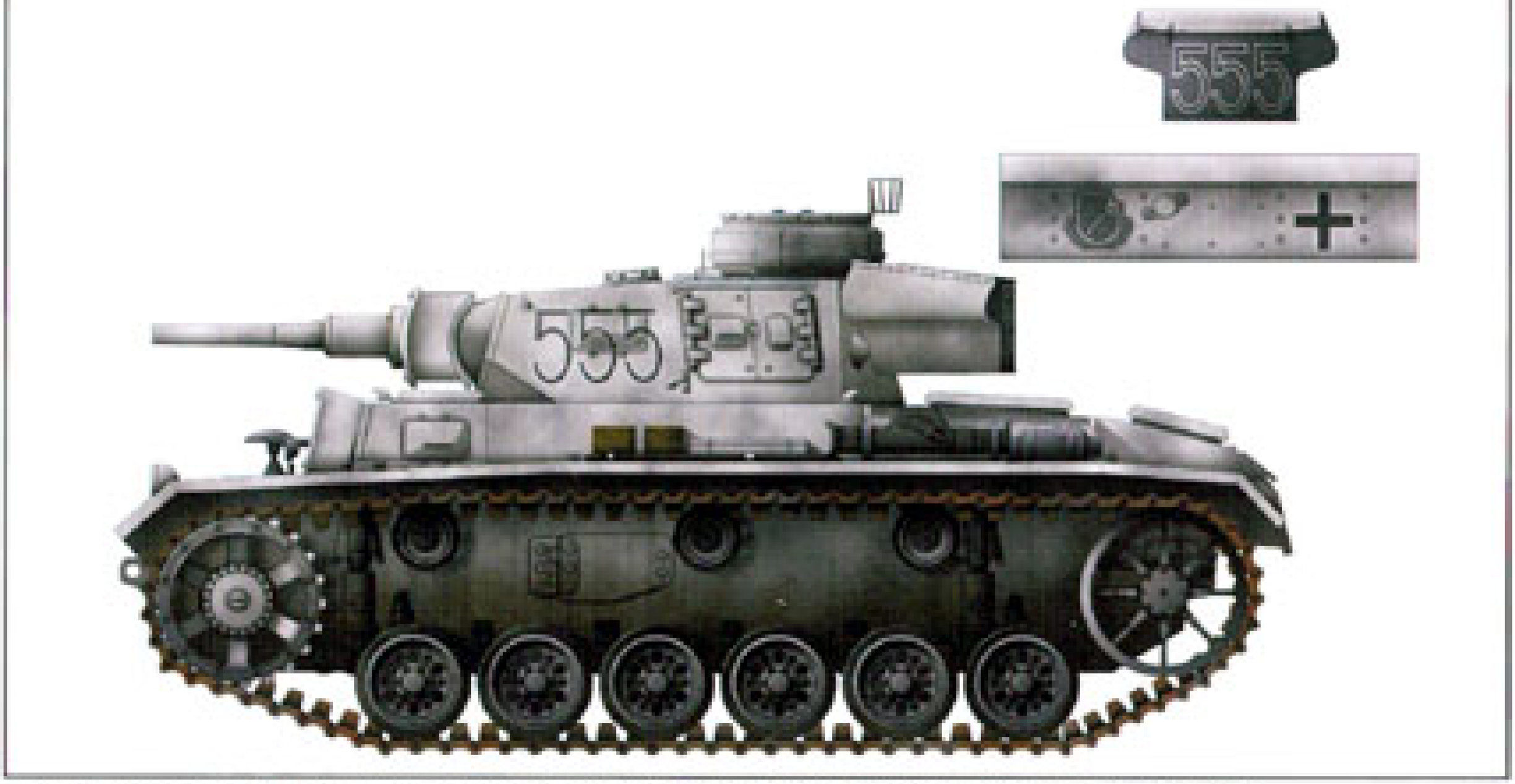
This Pz.Kpfw.IV also has "interim" features, of both the Ausf.G and Ausf.H. Note the Ausf.H final drive/drive sprocket combination as well as the bolted-on appliqué plate on the superstructure front and the welded type on the bow, normally seen on an Ausf.G. The single Bosch head-lamp on the port-side fender has the removable cover in place. Note how the spare track links feature both closed and open styles of guide teeth, and the tiny canine crew member peeking out of the radio operator's hatch.

Pz.Kpfw.III AusfE "Tauchpanzer" of Panzer-Regiment 18, 18.Panzer-Division, "Operation Barbarossa", Soviet Union, June 1941

This Panzer is identified as being modified as a submersible by the flange around the rim of the turret front plate (where a canvas cover was fixed to seal the mantle area), as well as the cover on the engine air intake grills. The markings on the turret side consist of a divisional insignia (upright "Y" with three horizontal strokes) in yellow and a Tac number "101", in white designating the panzer as belonging to Panzer-Regiment 18, I.Abteilung, 1.Kompanie headquarters. A white-outlined Balkenkreuz with a black center is below the turret on the side of the superstructure. It was common for the insignia of Panzer-Regiment 18 (a skull on a black shield with stylized waves running through the background), to be displayed on the turret stowage bin's rear face. The base color is overall Dunkelgrau RAL 7021.

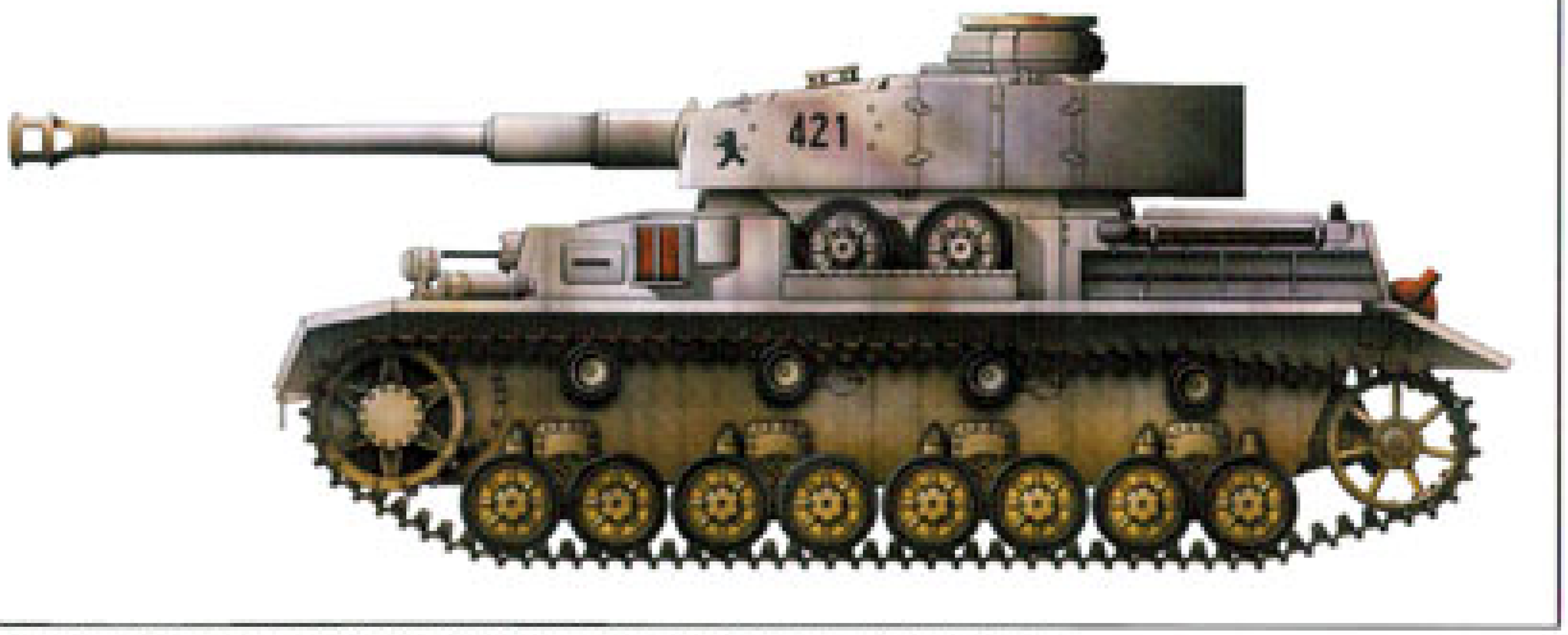
Pz.Kpfw.III AusfJ, 11.Panzer-Division, Ostfront, 1942

The famous "Ghost Division" seemed to take great pride in displaying their unofficial insignia, since it is seen on no less than four places on this Panzer (the rear superstructure plate, a box on the engine deck, and on both sides of the forward superstructure sides), painted in white. The official divisional insignia, a circle bisected by a vertical line, is seen in yellow on the right side of the rear superstructure plate and on the sides, just aft of the view ports. A Panzer rhomboid is painted in white on both sides of the turret, below a Tac number, "21", in white. The number is repeated on the turret bustle stowage bin, while a black/white Balkenkreuz national insignia is also seen on the superstructure side and rear plates. The base color is overall Dunkelgrau RAL 7021.



Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.J, SS-Panzergrenadier Division "Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler", Kharkov, Soviet Union, February-March 1943

Panzer number "555" is finished in a unique fashion with the rear surface of the turret bustle storage bin left in the original Dunkelgrau RAL 7021 base color. The Tac numbers are applied in a white outline style with open ends on each numeral. The sides of the turret have the numbers as well, but the whitewash has been applied up to the edges of them. If this Panzer follows the style of markings as seen on others in the Kompanie, there should be a unit insignia in white on the hull rear plate, as well as a black/white Balkenkreuz.



Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.G, Panzer Regiment 6, 3.Panzer-Division, Ostfront, winter 1943-44

This Ausf.G has the division's unofficial insignia, the "Berlin Bear" in black on the turret Schürzen, along with a Tac number, "421", of the I.Abteilung, 4.Kompanie, 2.Zug, panzer number 1, also in black. These appear to have been applied over the whitewash winter camouflage. A black/white Balkenkreuz is seen on the superstructure sides, just aft of the view port, with its top edge even with the top edge of the superstructure; this appears to be painted over the original base color. The base color would have been Dunkelgelb RAL 7028, while it is uncertain if there were any other colors applied prior to the whitewash.

This pair of Panthers (Ausf.A in the background, Ausf.G in the foreground) also appear to be in the midst of changing tracks. Note that the Ausf.A has very little in the way of tools or other items of stowage in evidence, and that it is also missing the stowage bin on the near-side hull corner. It carries a Tac number, 124 on the turret side, probably in black, with a white outline. The near Panther can be identified as an Ausf.G by the configuration of the exhaust pipe armored bases and their covers, and the way in which the stowage bin is fastened to the hull rear plate. Note also the appearance of the tracks on this Panzer as well as the attitude of the two crew men, who are probably working to adjust the idler wheel.

This Panther Ausf.A can be identified by the combination of the superstructure armor configuration and the cast commander's cupola on the turret. The turret is an earlier type, which can be determined by the inclusion of an "MP-Stopfen" (pistol port) with armored plug on the rear face, next to the escape hatch. This Panther is parked against a tree line and has been lightly camouflaged with small cut pine trees. Note also how mud has become "impacted" on the idler wheel, which under certain situations (for instance, if the mud froze) could disable a Panzer. Later Panthers had a larger-diameter "self-cleaning" idler wheel in an attempt to mitigate such occurrences.

The sequence of photos depicting Panthers changing tracks are accompanied by this image of a 4.5-ton truck, with its 6-ton crane unloading rolled-up sections of replacement track. Diorama modelers should note that sources indicate the tracks, when new (note that there is no worn metal showing, nor do these tracks have any earth on them), were painted in a "red-oxide" primer color (Rot RAL 3000). Note that the officer directing operations wears a camouflage-patterned Panzer crewman's uniform and wears his holstered pistol.

Part of the initial deployment of the Tiger I to Tunisia in late 1942, was 1.Kompanie, H.s.Pz.Abt.501, represented here by heavy Panzer 122 (note the large, white-outline numerals on the turret side). The first photo shows the vehicle from the port side, with all five crew members seemingly waiting for something to happen. Since they have dismounted and set up one of their two MG34s, it can be surmised that the vehicle is disabled. Note the crew's belongings attached to the turret bustle stowage bin and the local vegetation applied in an effort to camouflage their heavy Panzer. In the second photo, Several details of note can be seen, such as the small metal "spike" on the upper edge of the mantle (used as a "rough sight" by the commander), the twin openings for the gunner's T.Z.F.9b binocular sight (without armor reinforcement over the holes), the straight edges of the hull sides where the "U"-shaped tow clevises are fitted, the unique positioning of the two Bosch head-lamps and the mud flaps. The Feifel air filter packs can just be seen at the rear edge of the superstructure, while the over-size Balkenkreuz national insignia (common on many early Tiger Is) is seen in the middle of the superstructure side plate.

This pair of photos depicts a destroyed German Jagdpanzer 38, seen in the Old Town section of Prague, Czechoslovakia in May 1945. In the first photo, some features that are revealed include the "Flammvernichter" (flame-dampening) exhaust and the earlier-style rear idler. Shadows on the road-wheels indicate that this vehicle also has wider "Ostketten" (east tracks) fitted. In the second photo, a Tac number, 353, can be seen on the superstructure side plate, while a female insurgent stands by.

A group of local citizens remove the corpse of a German soldier from the upper deck of a Jagdpanzer 38. This is a later production version as indicated by the "Flammvernichter" (flame-dampening) exhaust. Note also the sliding plate to the left of the engine deck air exhaust grill that was part of a system, which, when it was closed, diverted warm air into the crew compartment.

As German fortunes waned on the Ostfront local populations, including the citizens of Czechoslovakia, rose up against their oppressors. In Prague, underground militia forces managed to "requisition" quite a few AFVs, including several incomplete Jagdpanzer 38s (usually without the main gun fitted). This one is manned by Czech partisans and is marked with the initials "CSR" on the forward-most Schürzen plate, denoting the "Československé Republiky" (Czechoslovakian Republic). It does not mount the 7.5cm PaK39 main armament and sports the flag of the Soviet Union hanging from a staff on the glacis, plus various legends and a Czech flag painted on the superstructure side plate. The later road wheels have the lesser amount of riveted fasteners around the rims while the idler wheel is the dished type with four holes spaced around its rim.